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Leavitt, Sandra R.

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School



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Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle
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Introduction to the Fall 2010 Issue

Dr. Sandra R. Leavitt

This issue of *Strategic Insights* explores the fascinating nexus of climate and security. While the jury remains out on the ultimate consequences of climate change, and whether the implications of recent warming trends will be as profound as the more pessimistic scenarios have suggested, military planners and security experts have been considering the potential impacts, and devising mitigative measures in case recent trends continue or accelerate. In the far northern reaches of our planet, earlier seasonal ice melts and brief periods of ice-free conditions in the Arctic Ocean have been a reality for several years—forcing Arctic states and peoples to confront a more pressing imminence of climate security challenges than yet experienced in many other parts of the world.

In this issue, we consider both the broader issues of climate change and national security—as presented by Daniel Moran in “Climate Change and Climate Politics” and by Daniel Clausen and Michael Clausen in “Situating Climate Security: The Department of Defense’s Role in Mitigating Climate Change’s Causes and Dealing with its Effects”—and also the specific consequences of climate change on the Arctic region—as presented in “Structural, Environmental, and Political Conditions for Security Policy in the High North Atlantic: The Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Iceland” by Rasmus Gjedssø Bertelsen, and “Stability and Security in a Post-Arctic World: Toward a Convergence of Indigenous, State and Global Interests at the Top of the World” by Barry S. Zellen.

- In “[Climate Change and Climate Politics](#),” NPS Professor of National Security Affairs Daniel Moran shares insights from the introduction to his forthcoming edited volume, *Climate Change and National Security: A Country-Level Analysis*, which will be published by Georgetown University Press in 2011. His book appraises the intermediate-term security risks that climate change may pose to the United States, its allies, and to regional and global order, and thereby contributed to the growing literature on “environmental security”—a phrase that encompasses a wide range of policy problems. For many, Moran notes, environmental security is chiefly about addressing the challenges climate change may present to humanity and its institutions. Security in this context is to be sought through measures designed to mitigate or adapt to changes in the earth’s ecology, which may some day make current social and economic practices unsustainable. Others, including Moran, interpret climate change less as a direct threat than as an additional source of stress on the sinews of public life, which may cause fragile governments to fail, or provide new impetus for a range of violent outcomes, ranging from social upheaval to aggressive war. Moran’s book does not seek to comment on the likelihood that the environmental changes foreseen by current earth science will come to

pass, nor to evaluate policies that might be chosen in response to them—but instead attempts to lay the problems hypothesized by science on top of the known or anticipated challenges of international life, and to consider what might change as a consequence.

- In [“Situating Climate Security: The Department of Defense’s Role in Mitigating Climate Change’s Causes and Dealing with its Effects,”](#) Daniel Clausen and Michael Clausen note the publication of a bevy of key reports by respected think tanks, research organizations, and government agencies—including the latest Defense Department *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) and the *National Security Strategy* (NSS)—illustrate how climate has increasingly become recognized as a legitimate object of national security thinking. The authors consider three issues in their article—the emerging threat of climate change as it is currently known through climate change models; the way climate security is increasingly being internalized in the U.S. national security community; and the tasks the DoD can undertake to mitigate the causes of climate change and deal with its effects. The authors apply concepts developed by the Copenhagen School of securitization studies, which offers insights into how and why issues move beyond normal politics to become vital issues of security, as definitions of the national security are defined through the interactions politicians, external contexts, and audiences of key stakeholders, elevating issues such as climate change to the top level of the national agenda.
- Shifting to a more direct examination of the consequences of climate change on Arctic security, United Nations University professor Rasmus Gjedssø Bertelsen presents his article, [“Structural, Environmental, and Political Conditions for Security Policy in the High North Atlantic: The Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Iceland,”](#) in which he addresses the structural, environmental, and political conditions for formulating and implementing security policy in the Greenland-Iceland-Faroe Islands region of the high North Atlantic. All three of these “microstates” possess very limited absolute resources, yet are situated in vast, and increasingly important air and sea spaces undergoing a rapid geophysical transformation as a result of climate change. This article considers the public finance, administration, and security policy challenges facing these three northern microstates, each with small populations and narrow tax bases for security policy expenses – forcing policymakers to approach the new challenges creatively in their search for effective security policies.
- And lastly, in [“Stability and Security in a Post-Arctic World: Toward a Convergence of Indigenous, State and Global Interests at the Top of the World,”](#) Barry S. Zellen shares his observations from the Western Arctic, where he long resided, noting that like the high North Atlantic, the North American Arctic has also experienced a rapid transformation during the last few years as unprecedented ice melts caught ice scientists, climatologists, and northern residents all by surprise, resulting in ice-free conditions in both Canada’s Northwest Passage and Russia’s Northern Sea Route for the first time in human history. Zellen examines how increasing commercial and strategic activity in the Arctic basin will

bring the region's long-isolated indigenous peoples into closer and more frequent contact with the modern state, testing the new systems of self-governance conceptualized and negotiated in an earlier time. Zellen's article examines the political modernization of the Inuit and their integration into the political fabric of the modern state through a mosaic of bilateral land claims and self-government processes that more closely bind tribe and state, and considers how the thawing of the long-frozen Arctic will affect these nascent governing structures at the top of the world.

In addition, we present a new conference report, "[U.S.-China Strategic Dialogue Phase V: 'Connecting Long Term Goals to Contemporary Policy'](#)," on the fifth annual session of the U.S.-China Strategic Dialogue, which was held in Honolulu, HI on May 2 -4, 2010. The Dialogue is a track 1.5 conference; thus, while formally unofficial it includes a mix of government and academic participants. Organized by the Naval Postgraduate School and Pacific Forum-CSIS and both funded and guided by the Advanced Systems and Concepts Office of the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency, the goal of this series of annual meetings has been to identify important misperceptions regarding each side's nuclear strategy and doctrine and highlight potential areas of cooperation or confidence building measures that might reduce such dangers. Beyond that, the conference aims to deepen American understandings of the way China views nuclear weapons, the domestic debates that shape those views, and the degree to which there is change in strategy, doctrine, and force posture in Beijing. Previous meetings focused their discussions on general perceptions of the utility of nuclear weapons, the nature of current nuclear strategy and operational concepts of each side, regional issues pertaining to nuclear weapons issues, and prospects for cooperation with regard to specific policy areas. This year, the meeting was organized around six panels (see the attached agenda) centering on the key strategic threat perceptions of each side—general and proliferation related—and the various sorts of security policies each undertakes to address these threats—unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral.

We hope you enjoy our Fall 2010 issue, and look forward to seeing you again soon.

Dr. Sandra R. Leavitt
Executive Director
Center on Contemporary Conflict
Naval Postgraduate School